

## Ingenue by acidjaguar

**Category:** Stranger Things (TV 2016)

**Genre:** Alternate Universe - College/University, Alternate Universe - Modern Setting, Eventual Smut, F/M, Hurt/Comfort, Implied/Referenced Drug Use, Implied/Referenced Suicide, Past Character Death, Slow Burn, a redemption arc kinda plays in, jonathan is v hipster, jonathan thinks nancy is the stars!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!, nancy likes to use drugs to cope with pain, steve is more of a pretentious hippie than an actual dick

**Language:** English

**Characters:** Barbara "Barb" Holland, Eleven (Stranger Things), Jonathan Byers, Joyce Summers, Mike Wheeler, Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington, Will Byers

**Relationships:** Jonathan Byers/Nancy Wheeler, Steve Harrington/Nancy Wheeler

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**Warnings:** Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings

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**Summary:**

The year is 2011. When Jonathan Byers moves to the west coast for college, he has trouble transitioning in the beginning. He spends days and nights alone in his room, smoking joints and listening to music. As he's about to give up on finding any meaning, he meets Nancy Wheeler - a trainwreck of a girl who has seen the end of the universe and back, who constantly finds herself stuck in situations she's uncomfortable in. Jonathan is entranced, and wants to brighten her world as much as she gives meaning to his.

# 1. alligator

## Author's Note:

I have not written fic in years, but something about Jonathan and Nancy's connection stirred a drive in me. I'm unsure as to how long this will go on for, but hopefully it's well received! Hope you guys enjoy, leave friendly critiques!

It started the way it always did; in his room, on his bed, his headphones clamped tight over his ears. It was unusually warm for mid-October, and Jonathan Byers found that he was missing the chill. The lights dancing through his room were the markings that it was growing close to dusk, and he sighed.

Life at Portland State had been difficult to transition into. He occasionally looked back at how excited he had been just earlier this spring when he had received his acceptance letter, how anxious he was to move across the country.

Joyce Byers was unsurprisingly supportive, yet a tad frazzled when he had first expressed interest in Oregon.

“Portland State? I thought you were going to NYU. What made you change your mind?”

Jonathan had shrugged lazily, picking at his fingernails. “I don’t know. Change of scenery, I guess.”

“Is NYU not a big enough change for you?”

“Well, it is. I don’t know, Mom. I just like Portland.”

Joyce looked at him for a moment, and made a sound of what he wasn’t exactly sure, but it had sounded like a mix between disapproval and contentment.

Now that he was here, Jonathan still found it difficult to get along with people at school. Portland was nice, and he had been right – it was definitely a change of scenery. It just wasn’t the change he had

initially expected, and he spent his days going along, his mind racing with dark thoughts that matched the dark storms they had had just within his first month.

Finding anyone to connect with was increasingly frustrating. Almost everyone at his school was some sort of new age hippie, taking LSD and DMT in order to seem cool and different from everyone else. He knew it was all faked. If you were an artist, he often thought, you did not need to compare every piece of art to the synthetic drugs you enjoyed taking.

He lifted the hand rolled joint in between his fingers to his lips, flicking the lighter and inhaling deeply and sharply, playing with the cloud of smoke around him before the buzz set in. He had Grizzly Bear playing on his iPod, and drummed his fingers lightly as he turned his head to stare at the window.

The rain that splattered on his window eerily reminded him of the nights he had spent relentlessly looking for his missing brother, back when he was only fifteen. The month long ordeal had been in vain – they eventually found his mangled body floating at the end of the river, and now, two years later, Jonathan felt even more closed off than ever. He knew he wasn't able to talk about it to anyone at school. They wouldn't understand – they never did.

He looked over at his clock, which seemed to be laughing at him. It was 4:45, which meant he had about another five minutes to get ready for his Photography 101 lab. He had laughed the first time he had picked the class – Jonathan had been behind the lens of cameras since he was six. A beginning photography class was the last thing he needed, but as a prerequisite, he took it in stride.

Besides, nothing had mattered to him anymore anyway.

As he strolled over to his class, yet again drowning everything else out with the music blasting in his headphones, his mind was blank. As far as he was concerned, today would just be another day where he could either scribble dark figurines across his paper or work in the dark room by himself. Hopefully.

He opened the door and stepped inside the lab, and was immediately

startled. He was often the first person there, but there was an unfamiliar figure. Said figure had long curly brown hair, and a gentle face with hooded eyes that seemed to know all of the secrets of the world. Her entire posture screamed pretentious hipster, but for some reason Jonathan thought she was the most intriguing thing he had seen in years.

He took his usual seat – the front left of the lab near the window – and got all of his materials out while he continued to study this new girl. She was dressed in all black, with tan hiking boots that stood out against her legging-clad legs. He was feeling entirely too high and shy to even speak his name coherently, so that was it for him introducing himself, he figured.

The classroom eventually filled up, the mysterious girl continued to read. His mind was occupied with trying to figure out exactly what, but from the angle he was at, he wasn't able to see the cover. As he was about to study her again, their professor walked in, startling her.

That was when she looked up and locked eyes with him.

Jonathan's face heated up and he quickly looked back down, listening to the professor call roll. The person who had decided to sit next to this girl was eagerly chatting her up, and Jonathan recognized him easily. The voluminous hair with too much product belonged to no one other than Steve Harrington. Steve was one of those guys who took art classes for fun and proclaimed to be "enlightened", when he was really just a skater bro who liked to take psychedelics occasionally.

Jonathan tried to hide his emerald colored jealousy as he was called, and he relaxed again before hearing her name called for the first time.

Nancy Wheeler. Nancy. Nancy.

He was startled once again when their professor assigned a group project that would eventually determine their final grades. And since this was apparently high school, he had groups picked out beforehand. Jonathan listened to him list off different groups, before he finally heard his name again.

“Jonathan Byers, Steve Harrington, Barbara Holland, and Nancy Wheeler.”

He really needed to stop getting high before class.

Since Nancy and Steve were already sitting together, he quickly and quietly shuffled over. The girl who sat next to him, whom he quickly figured out to be Barbara, had a mess of wild red curls on her head. She had thickly rimmed glasses, and was a bit curvy in her mom jeans and athletic jacket. She sent him a smile in greeting, and he awkwardly smirked back before focusing on his hands again.

He had to focus on something other than this wondrous Nancy, who smelled faintly of lavender and lemon. Or maybe it was just the Febreeze in the classroom.

“For the rest of this semester, you’ll be working on a project that will highlight something you find inspiring. It can be an object, a person, an animal, an event – whatever your heart chooses. It needs to tell a story, and everyone in each group must agree on the subject and setting. Today will comprise of brainstorming. Have fun.”

The professor turned back to grade their latest project, and Jonathan was sure again that his ideas would be drowned out. He didn’t really find anything that inspiring, anyway.

For the next half hour, he listened to his group deliberate while he sat in content silence. That was until he heard someone speaking to him with a soft, angelic voice.

“What about you, Jonathan? What do you find inspiring?”

He knew it came from Nancy. He knew that if he looked up at her now, he would surely blush under her gaze and no one wanted that. Instead he just shrugged, sighed, and answered reluctantly with “I don’t know. I like New York City a lot, I guess. My family, maybe.” He instantly cut off, his reply short. There was no way in hell he was mentioning Will.

The girl smiled, he could tell out of the corner of his eye, and suddenly Steve spoke up.

“Don’t you think that’s a bit bland? You seriously can’t think of anything better?”

It was definitely brasher than what Jonathan was expecting, and his words stung, but he ignored the frat boy.

Nancy frowned, and quietly spoke up with, “I thought it was a good idea.”

Jonathan smiled under his breath, the corner of his lip quivering at her standing up for him.

Steve shrugged. “Whatever.”

This continued on for the rest of the lab, with the group suggesting ideas and Steve shutting them down instantly, saying his ideas were “revolutionary and mind blowing”. Jonathan didn’t think any of them stood out in particular, but he sat in silence. He didn’t have the energy to argue, not with cannabis still in his system.

Once the lab ended and Jonathan headed out the door, he walked around the corner to light a cigarette. His free hand dangled at his side, drumming nonsensical beats. He sat there for a minute in silence, before he heard the door open again and a person stepped outside to stand next to him.

Nancy.

He felt her before he actually saw her, and when she walked up to him and lit her own, he raised an eyebrow in confusion. It made sense, but it had still thrown him off guard.

“Hey,” he said, smiling at her.

“Hi,” she replied. Her grin had to be the sunlight, because he suddenly felt blind.

“So...” he started, shuffling his hand into his pocket as he took another drag, “How did you switch classes so late in the semester? Why?”

Nancy shrugged. “I was in this lame geography class that got

cancelled because no one showed up. I like photography, so they put me in here.”

They paused for a moment, with Jonathan silently nodding before she spoke again.

“Your ideas back in class – I meant what I said. I thought they were good.”

She grinned, and he chuckled. She had to be an actual angel.

“Thanks. I usually do all of my work solo, so it’s hard for me to contribute ideas in class, I guess. Group projects aren’t really my thing.”

Nancy frowned, taking another drag of her cigarette. “Why is that? I get being introverted – I’m a bit shy too, but if you have an idea that strikes you, why not say it? What’s the point in having ideas if they’re not at least explored?”

He jumped at her question, it was the last thing he had expected from her. “I... I don’t know. I grew up pretty shy, so I just don’t really talk much.”

She nodded, and they ashed their cigarettes on the ground before she picked both up. “Better be careful with littering.”

He had never met someone who cared about him throwing his butts on the ground before.

She slung her bag higher up her shoulder and flipped her hair. “Anyway, I’ve gotta make it home – I live a half hour away and my brother wants me home for dinner. See you Tuesday?”

Jonathan nodded. “Yeah. See you Tuesday.”

She smiled, and waved at him before hopping off, her curls dancing around her.

That had been the most interesting evening Jonathan had experienced in his life.

## 2. through the eyes of a child

### Notes for the Chapter:

ahhh thank you guys so much!!! i was not expecting this to be received so well, so i've been really excited about chapter two and here it is!! :) i apologize in advance if my updates are not always this frequent, i've got a lot of things going on in my personal life and i am going to try and set aside at least a few hours per week for this. i am also going to play around with a few different points of view for this story, so here's a bit of a preview into that.

i also did not mention this before and it seems that these ideas are striking me as i'm writing, but this is going to be pretty heavy. there's a suicide mention later in the chapter, and i'm going to update the tags as to what this has. i'm also working on making a playlist for this so stay tuned ((:

reviews are always appreciated!

i listened to all my demons greeting me as a friend by aurora for the entirety of the time i wrote this chapter, chapter title is a reference to through the eyes of a child.

### I.

Your weekend had gone by in a hazy blur, focusing on your homework and trying to ignore Steve's constant messages of asking you to go to drum circles with illicit activities. It wasn't that you didn't enjoy partaking in those activities, you swore.

It wasn't your fault. Not really, anyway.

Who could blame you for turning to nights of cocaine and psilocybin if you were unable to rid the constant deformed and grotesque images in your head?



You chose to shadow and mask yourself. Eight years later, even after viewing in horrifying detail how the limp body of your father swung; his bristled neck strained against the frayed rope, this was still the image that first struck you whenever anyone asked about your silly glasses stick and poke.

You didn't tell them any of this, and you sure as hell never mentioned how you had placed it on your arm, along with countless others across your body, to replace the feeling that you had so missed of the silver blade.

You were trying to be good. Recovery was your only option.

And then there was Jonathan. You had first noticed him when he stepped in the classroom a mere ten minutes later, yet you had felt too afraid to look. It had figured that the professor would group the two of you together with Steve and Barb, the universe often laughed in mysterious ways.

You still aren't sure what it is about him. All you know is he has the most beautiful eyes you have ever seen, and his offstandish demeanor hadn't scared you one bit.

If there was anything that scared you, it was the fact you had no damn idea as to how to start this project. Luckily enough, the idea had been suggested for you to exchange phone numbers, and now you were sitting in your bed, staring at the syllabus with his scrawly handwriting across the top.

With shaky hands, you tuck a loose strand of hair behind your ear and slowly dial.

It doesn't take more than three things for him to pick up.

"Hello?" he asks with a raspy voice, it's clear he had just been smoking.

"Hey, Jonathan? It's Nancy, from photo composition."

"Oh! Hey," he says, and you grin inwardly. It's also clear he is surprised to hear you.

“Um... I was just wondering, do you want to grab coffee? I want to try to talk about this project more in detail.”

You hear shuffling, and a cough. “I-Sure? Shouldn’t we have Steve and Barbara join us then?”

“Yeah. I just really liked your ideas the best, and you seem the most proficient with this shit out of all of us. We’ll see them tomorrow anyway,” you say grinning into the phone, “and besides. I have a really cool place to show you.”

You hear him laugh, and it’s beautiful. But you can’t focus on that now.

“Sure. I’m down. Meet me in front of the library in twenty?”

“Sure.”

And that’s it. You take the next fifteen minutes to make yourself look decent enough to leave the house, and before you know it you’re sitting down right next to him, so close your bodies share warmth. It does well against the brisk chill of October.

“So I really just want to get a main idea of the subject we want to catch. I know that the project is relatively subjective, but I think if we can all agree on something tomorrow that’ll just narrow things down and cut our time in half, you feel?” You feel in control.

He nods. You bite your tongue to hide the comment that you think he looks good in a beanie and hunter jacket.

“Yeah. I think it’s going to be a bit difficult tomorrow, but if we can just kind of lay out ideas today, that’d be ideal.”

You nod and smile up at him, and he gives the smallest smirk back. It’s adorable.

There is a silence that passes between the two of you, and it feels so heavy it almost suffocates you. That’s new.

“So, um...” he starts, clearing his throat, “Where did you want to show me? I’m a bit new here so I need new locations to shoot.”

You nod enthusiastically. “It’s a surprise, but we can head over now if you want. Where are you from?”

He pauses, and you almost think there’s something dark that passes through his expression. Almost.

“New Jersey. My mom’s out there. She uh, wanted me to go to NYU, but I really needed a change of scenery I guess. Needed to get away from the bullshit.”

You’re almost surprised at how honest he is with you, and you nod in agreement. “I’m from San Francisco. I needed a change, too. I dunno, something about Portland just struck me as the change I needed.”

He looks down at you, and you suddenly feel exposed. When did your face start feeling hot?

You blame it on the shitty coffee and stand up. “Want to head over now? It’s pretty cool.” You grin and hug your coffee to your chest, bouncing on the balls of your combat boot clad feet.

He’s quick to stand up after you. “Yeah, I’m excited.” He smiles, again small, but it’s there. His hair is blown in all different directions, and his cheeks are pink from the frosty breeze. It surprises you that he’s from the east coast, because in this moment, he looks like a work of art. You shake your head, and begin walking in the direction of the woods behind your school.

II.

As they walk together through the forestry, Jonathan takes in everything around him with bewilderment. He hadn’t really taken the time to wander in the woods around the school, and immediately noticed what he had been missing. The layer of fog sat heavily in the thick smell of pine, trees engulfing him everywhere.

And in the middle of it all, stood Nancy Wheeler.

Her hair shines with gold highlights in the leaking sunlight and her movements can be compared to those of a gazelle, pure art. He had brought one of his film rolls with him and it felt like the perfect moment to just snap a picture, and so he does.

When Nancy looks up and laughs, he swears he could have died.

“Aren’t we supposed to take pictures of the subject we discuss?”

He shrugs and smirks, reaching into his pocket for a pre roll. “I can take pictures outside of class too, you know. Besides, I spend most of my paychecks on rolls, so it’s more of a pleasure thing.” He puts the devil’s lettuce between his lips, asking “Do you mind?” She shakes her head, and he lights it and inhales.

He stands there with one hand in his pocket and the other engulfed in the stench of sweet smoke, just watching her. In an instant, he forgets how this is only but a moment, engraving it into memory.

She walks back up the hill toward him, eyes momentarily on the rolled weed in his hand before she looks back up at him and smiles.

“I just wanted to bring you here because it’s somewhere I’ve been escaping to the last few months. That and it might be nice to shoot the project here.” She plays with the sleeve of her jacket distractedly.

He nods. If anything, he understands the need to get away. “It’s neat. I also think that is ideal, although I want to look around other locations first just in case. But this is awesome, Nancy. Good work.” A grin lights up his face for the first time in weeks, and his heart feels light.

She ducks her head with a smile, and Jonathan just continues to look at her. He wants desperately to touch her, but he knows he can’t. He knows he can underestimate how easily he breaks things. He had already broken Will, and he cannot bear hurting Nancy Wheeler.

Later that evening, after they walk around the entire afternoon (“Don’t you have class at 12?” “I’m already high and I’m here. Guess I’m not going.”) and Jonathan is back in his room, he finds himself running his hands through his hair. He is overwhelmed by how much he wanted to reach out and caress her sweet face, but he understands how creepy it would seem.

Goddamn it.

It wasn’t that he didn’t trust himself. They had only hung out once

and spoken twice. Jonathan had done this with so many people and none of them had left the effect that Nancy had been over the last four days. Maybe he just needed to take some time. Maybe he needed to get to know her more. Damn if he knew.

All he knew at this point in time was that he was fucked either way.

### 3. you got me into this mess

#### Notes for the Chapter:

so i caved and made a mix, it can be found here:  
<http://8tracks.com/volurs/you-will-be-queen> :)

song is ingenue by atoms for peace, um this chapter is going to focus on more development with the characters around them?? it'll also be a bit longer, so hang on haha. i've also started an aesthetic blog here:  
<http://whathavetheydonetoyou.tumblr.com/>

I.

On Tuesday afternoon, it is raining.

You're hanging out with Steve, and it feels painfully obvious; the way he's hitting on you. You play along, albeit reluctant, because he's a guy and he's sweet (if not a little pretentious and possessive) and he calls you beautiful and, fuck, he *wants* you.

You haven't felt anything like this because you've never allowed yourself to, and maybe taking LSD with him was actually a pleasant experience, and you refuse to think otherwise.

The only thing that bothers you, really, is how quick he always is to dismiss Jonathan. You're not sure why it bothers you so much, not fully anyway. You conclude it being the fact that you've now developed a friendship with him, and now that you're only a couple hours before photography, you can't help but bring up your ideas with Steve.

"I don't know, Nance. That guy is weird. Are you sure you want to listen to his ideas?"

You don't like it when he calls you Nance, but you shrug it off.

"I think he's a good contributor. He's obviously more skilled in this shit than we are, and he has really good ideas. He's also part of our group, in case you weren't aware." Your eyes shoot daggers, feeling

defensive. You've never stuck up for someone like this, not even Mike. It's an odd rage that stirs inside you, mixed in with the red bubbling that releases within strands of hair and goosebumps whenever you're around the dark boy who is so into his cameras.

Maybe even more so than any person he's ever talked to. You refuse to let yourself think this.

Steve, next to you with his clammy hand on your thigh, sighs. "I just think that my ideas are good, you know? I feel like I'm not being heard. It feels like you're choosing him over me."

Now, that's not fair.

"Why do you think so?" you ask him, your eyebrows furrowing. "Am I not allowed to hang out with the people I like?"

You're going nowhere with this. You can't understand why he's so adamant about his jealousy of Jonathan, you aren't even together. He's kissed you, sure, but you're still not sure if you trust him yet. You know that he's the kind of guy who just sleeps with every girl he can. And he sure can, because he's got the looks for it.

"I didn't say that. Just... Think about listening to other people, too."

You're not sure how to reply to that, because you feel like you're being fair, but maybe you aren't, so you just nod slowly. "Sure."

And in the classroom a few hours later, Jonathan is stealing glances at you, like you have a shared secret. You catch yourself smirking whenever he does, but you try to cover it up by biting your lip so Steve, next to you, doesn't notice.

Barbara, normally the quieter one, speaks up.

"Why don't we shoot pictures of something that speaks to each of us individually, and comprise it together to make something that resembles a bit of companionship?"

You smile. You don't know her too well, but you've hung out with Barbara a few times now and it was actually a pretty good idea. "I like that. But how would we bring it together?"

She shrugs, "I guess we just figure it out over the next few weeks, but I'm sure we can figure it out."

Jonathan perks up from doodling on his paper, and you can't help feeling that he looks so damn adorable in his snowcap. "We could all brainstorm ideas today, and kind of just pick and choose whatever sounds and fits best."

You nod, and finally, Steve agrees. "I like that. But what if your favorite thing isn't physical, it's metaphorical?"

Jonathan visibly blanks. "You do understand that this is a project that has to do with our favorite physical thing, correct? Otherwise, it's not really relevant to the project."

"I mean, sure. I'm just having a hard time figuring out what sense of the physical norm has much to do with anything." He smirks and crosses his arms, leaning back in the chair.

He could be such a prick sometimes. You still blame it on his good looks.

"I'm just saying that without an actual subject, it'll be hard to actually capture whatever you're thinking of. It'll be even harder to bring it together in the final project, and that'll bring us all down. This is a group project."

Now you decide to silence yourself, because letting them go at it is the best way to handle anything at this point. You don't want to take sides, either. Neutrality feels like your best option in this case.

It continues on like this for the next few minutes, with Steve refusing to brainstorm literally anything, and Jonathan pressuring him to do so. You need a cigarette.

You step outside in the dark, lighting the smooth, dark roll in your fingers, and breathe.

It suddenly occurs to you that you should call Mike, at least while you're outside. It's been a few days, and you know he'd like to hear your voice. Right now, the best option seems to be hearing him too.



“Hello?” he asks, his voice raspy from smoking whatever he had, probably a bong rip. You smile and shake your head. You two really were related – you went through the same angsty fifteen year old things.

“Hey, Mike,” you say, happy to hear him, “How’s it going, bud?”

“I’m good. Aren’t you supposed to be in class now? What’s up?”

“Yeah, I’m just in the bathroom,” you lie. You don’t want Mike to know you’ve been smoking again. “Needed a break. I was missing your voice.”

You hear him grin into the phone. “Me too. There’s a new girl at school, her name’s Eleven? It’s kind of weird, I know. She’s an exchange student and really cool.”

You smile, you know this is the first time Mike has ever talked about a girl. You know it’s hard for him to and you start beaming with pride. He deserves a chance at happiness, and so does your mom. Hell, you all do, but you’re too focused on keeping them happy. After all, wasn’t that why you moved to Portland? To make sure you weren’t a burden anymore?

“That’s awesome, dude. I’m stuck working on this stupid photography project with a few different people, and right now they don’t seem to be agreeing on anything. It’s frustrating.”

“Yeah, I bet. I just hope they come to a compromise.”

You sigh. “Me too, Mike.”

There’s a pause while you finish your cigarette and ash it on the concrete.

“Anyway, I gotta go back. I’ll call you tomorrow, okay?”

“Okay! Have fun,” he says, and you hang up.

Back inside, it seems calmer than it was a few minutes ago. Maybe your absence was the way to fix things in your little group.

How angsty.

“Hey, Nancy,” Barbara pipes up, smiling as you sit back down, “We’re brainstorming. Feel free to write whatever you want.” She hands you a sheet of paper, and you thank her even though you didn’t really need any.

The rest of the class concludes in silence, and once you’re packed, you head straight out the door.

II.

Jonathan closes the door behind him, and is surprised (and frankly, a little disappointed) when he doesn’t see Nancy outside. He had no reason to expect her to stay, after all, they had still only hung out together once. But, fuck, was it bad for a man to hope?

He heads back to his dorm in silence, anxiously awaiting the moment he can finish the joint he had started earlier so he can focus on sketching. The only thing that he really wants to draw, however, is Nancy, and he knows this is inappropriate.

He hears, or rather feels, his phone ringing, and sighs when he sees his mother’s face light up the screen.

“Hey, Mom,” he answers, trying to force a grin.

“Hey bud,” Joyce says, visibly happy he’s answered, “I haven’t heard from you in a couple days. You okay? Still enjoying Portland?”

He bites his lip. “Actually, yeah, Mom. I am. I made a new friend this week, I’m working on a photography project that should turn out pretty cool.” He feels like he’s lying through his teeth. It wasn’t all a lie, he did have all of those things. The specifications of said things, however, was what he was unsure about.

“Oh, that’s good! Is it a girl?”

He doesn’t understand how Joyce always seems to read him, but he chooses to lie again. “It’s a girl, Mom, but it’s nothing.” Nothing from her end, anyway.

“Okay, whatever you say. Are you still coming home for Thanksgiving?”

“Yeah, I am,” he says, smiling. Seeing his mom again will help with the stress of being in a new place. “As long as you’ll have me.”

“Of course, Jonathan Byers! You’re my son.”

He can hear her tearing up, and he understands this as his cue to get off the phone. “I love you, Mom. I’ll call you later, okay?”

And when he’s back in the hallway of his dorm, there is nothing short of shock on his face when he sees a familiar curly haired figure sitting outside his door.

He had no idea how she had found him, but he was sure by now that she was absolute magic.

“Nancy?” he asks, nudging her gently with his toe, “What are you doing here?”

She looks up and grins at him. “I wanted to see you, of course. Do you want to go drink in the woods?”

Oh, he is sure that this is a terrible idea. “Um, sure. I don’t know what you like, but all I have is scotch.” He scratches his neck, hoping to god she isn’t a vodka person.

“That’s fine! I like whiskey,” she says, “I also have a bottle of rose I definitely need to kill off.”

He still isn’t sure why she’s offering this to him as an idea, but he’s definitely not passing up the opportunity. Especially not when she’s standing outside his front door in a leather jacket and a black dress.

“Okay, okay. Are you sure you won’t be cold?”

She glances down, as if she’s just now taking in the way she looks. “I think I’ll be fine, but if I get drunk enough I might ask for a blanket or two.”

He laughs. He’s still very unsure of how this night is going to pan out,

but he's sure it'll be nothing less of entertaining and interesting.

## 4. what have we done to you?

### Notes for the Chapter:

omg you guys are too sweet!!! thank you all for being patient, i know it's been a bit since i last updated, but life has been a bit hectic this week! i'm in the middle of moving and have been working on some art stuff and other such things, but i promise that this fic has been on my mind!!! i'm really excited to show you all this chapter, and hopefully i should knock out chapter four within the next few days. i often feel insecure about my writing and your comments on this fic and the playlist are v supportive and kind and they really push me to keep this going <3 so without further ado, here's chapter four! i apologize in advance for this

song is ingenue by death cab for cutie (wow, shocker)

### I.

You feel buzzed now, having drank most of the said bottle of wine with your newfound accomplice, and a smile is easily fitted on your features.

It really is a beautiful evening, and although you never know how these things pan out (these things meaning getting drunk with a boy you may or may not be attracted to), you do know one thing – Jonathan Byers, for the record, is a lightweight.

You would have never expected it from a mile away, but when he starts tripping over bushes and laughing at everything you say (that's also probably accredited to the weed), you can't help but grin. It's a very interesting, albeit useful, fact, and the way he's smiling at you, his face flushed and eyes shining, means more than anything Steve has even said to you.

So although you can't help but wonder what kissing that stupid grin

off his face might feel like, the possibility of his rejection stings in your heart a little bit and keeps you cautious.

You decide that you're going to try and keep your guard up tonight, even if it kills you.

Again, you're drunk, and you really should not trust the whiskey and wine ridden version of yourself. This version of you is entirely too flirtatious and bubbly, and you have spent years crafting the hardened version of Nancy Wheeler – the version you trust most, who smokes cigarettes like they're candy, who studies hard in school to distract yourself from the bullshit that happens seemingly everywhere. This version of Nancy is much too like your old self, and you don't feel comfortable with it.

This time, however, it feels completely *natural* around Jonathan. You're perplexed about this, but you have no time to wonder as Jonathan stumbles and sits down next to a tree.

He smiles at you again, and the way your heart stops, you swear it's because of the alcohol. "It really is beautiful out here. Do you always drink out in the woods?" He's smirking at you, eyes dark and boring a hole in you.

"Only when I need to get my mind off shit," you reply, surprised at yourself for being this honest.

He stands up again and reaches for a cigarette, flicking it with his lighter and taking a drag. "I feel you," he says, not quite reaching your eyes, "There's some shit I have to take my mind off of." He looks at you again, and you shiver under his gaze. It's magnetic and electric and makes you feel awake, but you can't touch him. He's not yours to.

He reaches out then and his arm grazes yours, and you can't help but wonder if he shares the same thoughts as you. You're not sure if he'd ever make a move, however, and the sadistic part of you laughs at this.

You wonder if it'll always be like this – the two of you running amuck in a forest, no sense of direction on your minds, no burdens

troubling you as all you focus on is each other. It's strange and beautiful, and you curse yourself because hanging out with him is weird.

And it's weird because you always saw yourself with the Steve type, and had never daydreamed about meeting a Jonathan. Yet, here he was, his cat eyes full of knowledge and cunning curiosity. You wished that you still had that light within you.

Two more shots of whiskey in, and you begin to wonder why you even thought this was a good idea. Your senses are dulled, and you feel pulled into his orbit, and you don't understand why you're not stopping yourself.

You run a hand over his shoulder and bury your face in his neck, planting a kiss there before you turn away and blush. You really should have seen his hand coming, because it instantly pulls you back toward him.

And you should be even less surprised when your breath is taken away between his lips, his fiery tongue dashing to meet yours.

II.

This new version of Jonathan – confident and sultry and dark – completely drowns out normal, shy, brooding Jonathan. He feels completely in control as his hand runs through Nancy's curls and his lips brush hers again and again.

Nancy.

He doesn't even have any sense of coherent thought as he pushes her back gently into the grass, his hands excitedly brushing and dashing over her skin. This tastes, fuck, it feels – better than anything he's ever encountered before.

It's all that keeps him going, until he feels his boner press against her thigh, and in an instant, they both pull away, panting for air.

Nancy has pulled away like she's been burned, and Jonathan's eyes feel heavy. They're not sure exactly what just happened, and he curses himself for letting him push something so forward that he

wasn't even sure if she was okay with.

"Um..." she starts, brushing a hand through her hair, "So that was like... A one time thing, right? I can't do a relationship right now, I hope you understand that."

He's pained by this, and his hurt obviously shows in the way he replies.

"So, what you're saying is you can run around with guys like Steve and not care if he hurts you, but you hold yourself back from those who care about you?"

He didn't think she would be this transparent. He feels betrayed, and he knows that he's overreacting, but there is so much whiskey and wine in his system that he can't stop the word vomit.

He wasn't sure if a cold shower was going to resolve this one, either.

She looks as if she's been slapped, and that fucking kills Jonathan, but he has to pretend to not care. He can't care. She just told him he can't care.

"It's not like that, Jonathan..." She trails off, tears forming in her beautiful, big eyes, "We only just met, you know? I have to focus on school before I can do anything like... this." She's twiddling with her thumbs and avoiding his gaze, because she knows that if she looks at him, she won't be able to restrain herself from jumping him.

"Really, Nancy?" he barks, "Don't give me that bullshit. You knew, since day fucking one, that I've been into you. Fuck, you're the only thing that's been on my mind for weeks, and that's shitty, you know? I can't even think about my own fucking brother-" he cuts off suddenly, wishing he hadn't said too much.

Now she looks angry, and instead of retaliating, she sighs and walks away, stumbling slightly with the empty wine bottle in her hand. And Jonathan could go after her, but he doesn't.

Instead, he watches her walk away, and when he punches the tree next to him, he's glad the alcohol dulls the pain.



## 5. never had the guts to give myself up

### Notes for the Chapter:

hey guys, i wanted to apologize again for that chapter... i really wanna get things going, don't worry i've got a lot more planned, i just kind of write as i go? again, really thank u all for the support and kind words, they mean a lot to me! i don't want to rant too much today, and this one's going to be a little short again, so without further ado here is chapter five

song is it hurts until it doesn't by mothers

I.

In January 2012, it is mostly wet and cold. This is not unlike your current emotion for the past three months.

You didn't really think much about Jonathan. You couldn't. And whenever you felt your mind slipping into that mode; the one where you still imagined the potential of you both, you had to pull yourself back and drown in alcohol and cocaine.

You knew you had promised Mike, but who kept promises these days anyway?

Your nights (and your bed) were mostly filled with Steve. You knew he was sweet if you looked hard enough, but he was mostly there for your comfort, and you didn't like feeling selfish, but fuck it seemed to drown out a lot.

Not to mention, you hadn't been back to the forest since that evening.

For the most part, it had been just entirely too cold, but that hadn't stopped you previously.

You knew somewhere in the back of your mind that he could potentially be there, and facing Jonathan directly after such a thing

sounded absolutely awful.

The rest of your fall semester had passed by easily, your photography project earning you an A. But the classes hadn't been filled with mindless banter anymore, it eventually became awkward and uncomfortable as Steve and Jonathan glared holes into each other.

Steve. He had been the one who was there for you during your nights of panic, but you had felt during every time that he just didn't quite... reach you. Undeniably, the only person you had met to match your intellectual level was the boy always behind the camera, but you were terrified of the fact that speaking with him came as easy to you as a duck to water.

Today was the start of your spring semester, and you would be lying to yourself if you denied wanting to take the second course of photography in hopes of seeing him. For all you knew, he could have been in a more advanced class, and this would all turn out for naught.

As you walked to said class now, you had a feeling settle in the pit of your stomach. It was one of both excitement and dread, both equated to the probability of seeing him. He probably hated every fiber of your being now, and you explained it to yourself as reasonable. It wasn't that you hadn't wanted to be with him, you just knew it was wrong.

So when you see him seeing in the back corner of the class, why do you feel your heart race as you pick a seat on the opposite side of class?

You quickly hide your face in your hair, hoping to God he doesn't recognize you, and you wait.

The class goes by agonizingly slow, and you feel a couple different times that he might be looking at you? But could you have been paranoid about it?

After it ends, you stand outside to smoke a cigarette (again, stop lying to Mike) and feel him stand next to you. The hair on your neck rises and the feeling you had when he kissed you is coming back, and

you know this can't turn out as anything normal.

Fuck.

II.

The last three months for Jonathan had been, to say the least, dragged on.

He was left with nobody again, and there was definitely more than one occasion when he cried himself to sleep. He realized quickly how much he really valued Nancy Wheeler in his life, and he knows he fucked up by kissing her – but he *needs* her, at least as a friend, and every time he sees her across campus with Steve, he makes sure to duck out quickly and head back to the woods.

Their woods.

He sees her in photography and it takes all he can to not stare at her the entire time. He barely even remembers what her voice sounds like now, and he's sure that once he hears it again, he just might melt.

He notices that she's standing outside after class, characteristically smoking an American Spirit between her perfect, plump lips. He has absolutely no idea if she's waiting for him or not, but he walks up to her anyway.

And he stands there for a few minutes, not saying anything. He lets the silence sink in, and for once in his life, it doesn't actually feel entirely uncomfortable. He's scared that speaking will break whatever thickness lies in the air between them, so when she walks away a few minutes later (only after looking at him with those big, sweet doe eyes), he doesn't blame her.

He's still relying on their natural connection for any chance at a reconciliation, the image of her face between his own and his hands still very fresh in his mind. This is what keeps him going.

He doesn't let Joyce know about any of this, for as far as she knows, Nancy wasn't anything to him except a former photography partner, and could they really have called their relationship by any other

label?

This class with Nancy Wheeler is only once a week, but he sees her three more times again before that second Monday even occurs.

The first time, she's with Steve. They're eating sandwiches in the cafeteria and she's giggling at some little joke he's telling her. He shouldn't feel as salty as he does about this, his mind clouding with thoughts along the lines of how she should be giggling at something he says instead, how there's a vast difference between her natural grins in the forest and this forced mask she has now.

The second time, she's lying in the grass in front of the library, smoking a cigarette in solitude. He still feels cautious, and knows that interrupting her won't do him any good, so he pays less attention to the jealousy that stirs in him and more on how the sunlight always makes her look ethereal.

The third time, he's stepping around a corner and suddenly runs into her.

They stare at each other for a moment before they even say anything, and it becomes a jumble of awkward sentences falling over each other ("How are you?" "I'm good, just going to the restroom. "Okay. You're in my photography class, right?" "Yeah, I think so.") and it's nothing more than that, and Jonathan can't look behind him as he's walking away so he relies on the hope that she's looking back at him instead.

On Monday evening, she's sitting across from him at their table.

## 6. in the veil of great surprises

### Notes for the Chapter:

more development!!! lmao okay so steve is finally making an appearance again in this chapter... and so will joyce, and like i said this fic is just gonna be full of angst & shit so more jonathan & nancy pining from afar like alWAYS (along with some post-LSD epiphanies from Nancy) okay here we go!!!

(also ps: roach = end of the joint, kind of like the butt of a cigarette, except you can keep smoking it)

song is the only thing by my good pal sufjan stevens....

### I.

You don't know whether it's the sunlight or Steve's kisses that wake you up, but it feels nice either way.

You've never been a morning person, not really anyway. You find that the dark comforts you most of the time, and you know Steve is bad for you, but he really does care about you... In a weird way, yes, but it still counted. And receiving affection did not seem like an entirely bad thing to you.

You had just taken acid the night before with him, and usually you're fried the next day after a trip, but since you don't have to do anything today, lying under the sheets with him in your naked forms was not exactly unpleasant.

You woke up with his nose pressed into your back, rubbing lightly across your abdomen and pressing his lips into your neck. You instinctively know you'll end up in this compromising position at least twice more today, but this doesn't stop you from stepping out of the bed.

Steve audibly protests against this, grabbing for your leg, but you

swat his hand away.

“How am I supposed to get dressed and ready for the day if you refuse to let me get up?” you ask him playfully, a smirk teasing the edge of your mouth. “I would like to wear clothes at some point, you know.”

He frowns. “But we don’t have to do anything today, Nancy. We could just lie in this bed all day.”

“We could, but I want to get out and do something.”

You blamed it on your need for productivity, which was accurate, you often distracted yourself with activity to take your mind off other serious matters.

Such as seeing your brother tomorrow.

You knew you had to tell him at some point, but did you really have to? You could just quit while you’re ahead, but you knew that this was wrong. It would be breaking the promise you gave him so many years ago of never keeping secrets.

So how would he look at you when you tell him you’ve been smoking even more than you did before you quit the first time?

Now was not the time to think about that, as you had taken a shower with your – frankly, you didn’t quite know what the relationship between you and Steve actually was, and you couldn’t really find it in you to care. As far as either of you knew, this was strictly a sex thing. You were definitely not the only person he slept with, but he did seem to pay more attention to you than others.

And as you’re walking through the forest with Steve – the same one you had kissed Jonathan in – you can’t help but think about how all of this feels different and foreign. You feel as if you’re dissociating a little, but you blame it on the after effects of the acid. People felt like this all the time, right?

You can’t help but reminisce on the way Jonathan had looked at you in admiration, how he had snapped a photograph of you walking through this same field, how the two of you shared some big secret,

like an inside joke no one else could understand.

You didn't like to treat people like they were secrets, however, and this had been a large factor in your rejection.

*Damn it, the intrusive thoughts are there again*, you think as you watch Steve talk to you, silently, numbing out all of your senses as everything becomes filled with Jonathan again. It's immense, how much you miss his clumsy smile and stringy hair, up to his beanies and hunter jackets that were always seemingly filled with roaches.

It hurts, really, to think about how much you miss your confidante. You had only hung out with him a total of three times, but all of those experiences with him had been significantly more impactful than the total amount of times you had now slept with Steve Harrington.

It hurts even more to look at him and realize now that Steve is only a rebound, a placebo in place of the one you really want.

You know that you're too jaded for anyone to be with, really. You weren't anyone's manic pixie dream girl, but you definitely did fall into that trope, and you knew that it was impossible for anyone to carry on a significant relationship with you if they weren't your brother.

Or Jonathan.

II.

The way she had looked at him on Monday evening was absolutely pitiful. She had yet to meet Jonathan's gaze still, but he had a sense that there was something still lurking there.

She had looked pained, and he didn't feel quite like being intrusive and asking about it, especially because they weren't friends, damn it! But he still felt this weird, off pain in his chest, and although it panged to watch her walk away every time, he knew that was for the best.

And thus, he knows that although it may kill him, he has to keep his distance.

When Joyce calls that evening, he's not prepared for the onslaught of questions she has for him, he's too stoned for it. Varying from "Why have you not called me in two days?" to asking about his spring break plans, Jonathan does not have the mental capacity for this right now.

It's the moments when Jonathan is speaking to his mother that he misses Will more than normal. He knows he's not in a good mental state at the moment, so when he hangs up on Joyce, it's short and abrupt and he really does not want her to make a big deal out of it. All he needs is to get some air, that's it.

When he walks into the forest, the last person he expects to see is still, unsurprisingly, standing there.

He's not even sure if Nancy sees him at first. She's out here with Steve of all people, and he knows that he has to duck away before she has a chance to notice him. He knows that their conversation wouldn't be anything less than extremely awkward if he doesn't move now.

And just like that, she turns and sees him.

She doesn't say his name, just some lame excuse to Steve about how she has to use the bathroom, and after he's ducked away in a bush for a few moments, he jumps once she's in close vicinity.

"Hi."

"Hey," he replies, a blank expression over his face. He's so frustrated with how he just feels numb right now, because if his body were responsive, Jonathan would readily pull her in.

Her eyebrows furrow, in what he's unsure of, but he guesses along the lines of confusion. "Um... I wanted to apologize. For... for what happened."

"Don't worry about it," he says, scratching the back of his neck. He's still not sure if she wants to be friends with him again, because he still notices the distance from her, but he's not entirely convinced that it is directed completely at him.



She nods. "Okay." Steve suddenly calls out her name, and they both know they don't have much time. It's a bit surreal, how they have some secret meeting here, but it doesn't feel entirely awful to him. It's at least better than having no contact.

"I gotta go, but I'll call you later. Okay?"

He wasn't even aware she had his number. "Sure."

When she smiles at him as she runs away, he feels his heart leap in his chest for the first time in months, and for once, everything feels okay. He could think about Will right now, but he won't, he'll focus on his secret apology with Nancy.

Later that evening, he finds the passion within him to write some new prose, and it may or may not have to all focus on the girl with big, glowing eyes and a mess of brown hair.

He knows solitude is his true comfort, so why is he just completely unable to get the idea of Nancy's company out of his mind? She has Steve, he has to keep reminding himself, and Steve is an ass, but he is attentive to her.

Still, that didn't mean he had to like the guy. Jonathan still felt wary whenever he noticed him, and he couldn't control anyone from choosing who they hung out with, so even if it was miserable, Nancy was entitled to her right to be with him.

He wouldn't cry about this tonight.

## 7. you dove in after trusting me

### Notes for the Chapter:

omg HELLO so i originally meant to post this two days ago but then half of it was deleted when my sister turned the computer off, but ANYWAY!! i am officially moved into my new house and have been here for a week now, i still have a little unpacking to do but for the most part it's done. also!!!! i am officially now co running my best friend's independent zine, which can be located here (<http://senselesspress.tumblr.com/>) and it would mean a lot to the two of us if you could check it out and maybe even submit some of your own art/writing!!

um that's about it i guess?? u will actually see mike in this chapter, there'll be some mentions of eleven, and more (v required) pining and guilt (esp from nancy)... enjoy #7!!!

song is like a fool by superchunk

### I.

It's Wednesday, and your thoughts have been almost entirely consumed with the apology you shared with him. You're not entirely sure how this turned into a *thing* – when had you and Steve even become emotionally attached? – and you're going to damn yourself forever for letting it take over your mind completely, but there's an undeniable force attracting you to the mysterious boy who always, *always* seemed to be so damn attached to that camera more than any actual person.

But you can't think about this now. You just can't. Mike's here, pulling up in that old station wagon that reeks of cigarettes and air freshener done by the last ten years, and the smile that beams up his face when he sees you makes all of this worth it.

"Hi," you say, immediately engulfing him in a hug (when the hell did

he get so much taller than you), “Did you have a nice drive?”

He shrugs lazily. “Yeah, it was just longer than I expected.” And could you blame him for this? Everyone thought Portland was such an easy drive up from the bay, and you’re thankful that he has the week off school, but you knew that it was at least a day’s journey, and you wouldn’t be surprised if the two of you ended up smoking in your room later.

And twenty minutes later, that is exactly how it pans out.

He’s leaning his head back on your pillow, staring up at your ceiling, as you take a rip from his bong and blow it outside the window, into the persistent rain that almost always seemed to be there.

“So what’s been up?” he says suddenly, and you love the way his eyes are glazed over. This is a Mike you’re used to, not this newly seventeen one who drives cars and has a girlfriend (named El; you must remember this). “It’s been a minute since we’ve hung out like this.”

You nod, carefully constructing your words so that you’re not completely lying and don’t feel one hundred percent guilty about it, but so that it’s vague enough that he won’t ask questions. “Not much, just been starting this new semester. I walk through the woods a lot when I want to clear my head. I’ve made a couple new friends.” It sounds so casual, so unlike you, but you roll with it, and it seems to work.

The rest of the day rolls by like this, and you’re glad he’s with you through Friday, because the next time you’re sure to see Jonathan is Monday (and Steve... Steve is tentative) and you really need *something* to keep your mind off thinking about the two of them for the next few days.

This something happened to be your younger brother, and when you decide to show him the woods later (mostly because he pestered you about it, partially because it really is beautiful and although the overtones scream Jonathan’s name, it really is a place of comfort and solitude), the two of you are sharing a bottle of Moscato and a joint, and you’re so high that your mind cannot focus on any actual form of

thought. This, you will think later in your bed as you try not to imagine Jonathan's hands running over you, is exactly what you needed.

On Thursday, it's still raining, and you can't help but grin when you see Jonathan's name light up your phone screen with a text, asking if you want to shoot photos in the woods later.

You're in it so bad.

You're also not sure how much longer you can keep this from Mike, especially since Steve is also asking when the two of you will hang out next, and you have the same short reply to both of them: that your brother is visiting, and you would love to see them, but it'll have to wait until the weekend.

You shouldn't be feeling guilty about this, you think as you roll over in bed. There should not be a pit of dread settling in your stomach, and more importantly, there should *not* be something else settling there when you picture Jonathan kissing you as fervently as he did three months ago. But it is there, and when you decide to touch yourself in the early hours of the morning, it's not Steve you're picturing, but most definitely Jonathan.

You wonder, impishly, what his rough hands and knowing mouth would feel like over your neck, your breasts, your stomach, your thighs, your clit – You already know how Steve works, and he makes you feel good, and sure the two of you are friends, but is there really anything more to it than that?

You know exactly how selfish it is to string him along, but could it really be considered as such when you were so confused about everything?

When you come in the shower, it's so hard that you have to muffle your cry. You're oh so thankful that it doesn't wake Mike up, and now that it's early Friday morning, you're a bit disappointed that he's leaving later this evening, but you know that he has shit to do, as do you, and the rest of your day goes by with you smiling at him sadly, feeling even more selfish that you just want him to say. It's unfortunate that he still has the rest of this school year and the next

before he even goes to school, but he's really the only thing anchoring you.

You know you're also lying to him about the drugs and the cigarettes, but you know Mike has to deal with your mother's depression on a daily basis, and the last thing he needed was to hear about your vices.

When he leaves that afternoon, he has no idea that you're going to go hang out with Jonathan, and as you hug him goodbye, you see that familiar figure looming in the background, ever so silently watching the two of you until Mike leaves.

And when he finally reaches you, the butterflies in your stomach escalate so highly that you feel you're going to faint.

## II.

Jonathan doesn't count how many times he has touched himself with the image of Nancy Wheeler on his mind. He doesn't count how many times he thinks about her little frame, underneath him, in his bed. Or hers. It didn't even have to be a bed.

What he does count is the hours he has until he can see her again.

It drags by ever so slowly, and when he sees her hugging what he assumes to be her brother from across the parking lot, he knows his waiting is up; in one sense, anyway.

They're in their corner of the woods again, the corner that screams tension and romantically lit nooks and crannies in trees, and he is snapping photos of her, and time seems to always stop here. It's heavy and thick, and he can't help but comment on how beautiful she is, and when she blushes, everything in the world makes sense again, even if this doesn't.

They continue through, and she's so high that it seems funny to him, but they split a joint anyway, and he's unsure of whether it's the effect of the cannabis or the dopamine rising in his brain, but he really cannot take his eyes off her, and his jealousy of her relationship with Steve is almost unbearable, but he needs this.

She asks him later what he finds most beautiful in the world, and he really has to bite his tongue from replying that it's her, and instead talks about viewing sunrises in Indiana. He knows it's cliché and something not unlike poetry, and he's inwardly punching himself for it, but she smiles and agrees.

"That's lovely, Jonathan."

Later, in his dorm room by himself, he wonders how much she actually thinks about him, or if she even does at all (no, this was self doubt and deprecation, he couldn't allow himself to think like this), and he cannot find the words to express exactly what she does to him, but he hopes to God that Steve even feels an ounce of what he does, because if he's using Nancy, that would kill him and he doesn't know how much he'll be able to restrain himself from hurting him.

This much he knows: that she is not unlike the stars and the moon, and she is as blinding as a solar eclipse, bringing him new revelations, and that she is more of a concept than a person, and that when he gets shit faced he thinks of nothing but her.

When he falls asleep later that night, he takes his pillow in as a comfort, pretending that it's her, and hoping that this burn eases more and more over time.

For now, all he has is her comfort and her company, and all he can do is pine from afar.

## 8. it's like talking to a friend who is trying to be a lover

### Notes for the Chapter:

hi!!!! okay so it has been absolutely ages since i last updated and i apologize for that but um?? i've missed writing this???? and lately i've just been missing the jonathan/nancy centric fic world as of late so i wanted to contribute again... so here is chapter 8!!! please enjoy :)))

song title is from i blame myself by sky ferreira (aka the perfect jonancy song i recommend highly)

### I.

The question you keep asking yourself this week, of all things, is whether Steve is going to plan anything for Valentine's Day, and if not, why can't you bring yourself to get over the fact that you want the shy boy with a camera lens as a language to be sleeping next to you?

You don't even want anything out of it, really – well, you do, but it's more along the lines that you can't get the scent of him out of his veins. You still can't help but think of your messy, sloppy kiss last November, and how it felt more authentic than any goddamned thing that had in the last few years of your life.

You can't get Mike's face out of your head, even as you descend into the void of every ascending acid peak. It's unsure of how he would react to all this, but you are sure of one thing – he would most definitely not approve of Steve. And could you blame him? After all, this was your own bizarre version of teenage rebellion, angst, grief, and pining rolled into one single joint of haphazard messes.

You're not sure how much more you can deal with, between the lazy smiles of Steve Harrington and the stark laughter of Jonathan Byers, and it suddenly comes to you.

Spring break is but a few weeks away, and you need to disappear

again.

Because no one's really going to notice, right?

II.

Jonathan is unsure of how he got stuck here, in the car of a half naked girl, his drunken state abandoning his consciousness, but he is certain that this is not Nancy and that he is going to vomit.

The question was, was the inducing of said vomit from the amounts of alcohol he had consumed or from the fact that was, quite literally, not the girl he wanted to be with?

He feels terrible, so he murmurs out some half hearted apology and stumbles out of the car.

He wanders for a while down the street, quite unsure of where he's going, and there's a full blanket of white snow, seemingly mocking and jarring against the dark night. This is how he stays for the next hour, by which after this point he's not entirely clear on whether the walk simply feels long, or if he's gone out farther than he intended, but the moment his dormitory comes into view he lets out a shaky breath of relief.

In a blur, he's at the door to his dorm room, and for once, he lets himself think about Will.

His face feels wet. It's a mixture of tears and frost melting off, and he hears the faint playing of The Clash next door, and he's suddenly sinking to the floor.

He's never told Nancy about this, but she's the first one who comes to his mind about actually speaking.

The alcohol in his brain has dulled his senses, so he frantically sends her a message relaying everything that happened two years ago and throws his phone onto his bed.

Somehow, he ends up in the shower, and the hot water becomes a comfort, even though all he can think about is how he hazily left some girl alone in her car – Carol, he starts to recall – and how when



it comes to Nancy, he can't think of anything besides the fact that he is definitely in some deep shit.

After he ends the constant touching of his sensitive skin, he turns off the shower and checks his phone.

Nancy was coming over.

### III.

You had been sleeping alone, not having spoken to Steve at all the last three days, when you got a jumbled text from Jonathan. It was something about his brother, something about how he had dumped in a river when Jonathan was still in high school, and all you knew was that he needed comfort, and he needed you, however much of a bad idea that could turn out to be.

You're there, knocking on his door, and he's here, standing in nothing besides a pair of pajama pants, his chest gleaming, his hair damp and messy from a shower.

*Oh.*

And then, you realize how much of a mess this has turned out to be.

You can't stop yourself from reaching out and wrapping your arms around his waist. He's warm, and he smells absolutely delicious, and *holy fuck his abs.*

"I'm here," you say, as if to confirm a fact he might have been questioning.

He nods, and wordlessly gestures towards his bed. You sit down and wordlessly begin packing a bowl in his pipe. He's staring at you so intensely you think your heart might leap out of your chest, so you swallow it back down and try to form a sentence to speak.

"If you need to say anything, if you need me to say anything, just speak up."

It's definitely more intrusive and demanding than you had originally intended, but you had done so much skirting around each other the

last four months you needed something out of this.

He's quiet then, and for the first time since you stepped inside, he looks away. You can almost feel what he's about to ask you, but you still aren't prepared for what actually comes.

"I need to know exactly what the fuck is happening between us, Nancy." He looks back at you, and he's so beautiful, you restrain yourself from reaching out and caressing his face. "I need to know if the fact that I am completely infatuated and in love with you is too much for you to deal with. I need to know how much you regret me kissing you, I need to know if there is any goddamned chance that you feel a fraction for me as I feel about you, and if you do, I need to know how the fuck Steve fits in with us. I need to fucking know, Nancy."

There are tears forming in your eyes, and you are wordless.

It's not as if you entirely try to stop yourself, but you feel some sort of magnet pulling you towards him, and suddenly his lips are under yours, and you're climbing into his lap.

There is such a drive in him now, and you can't really care less that this is happening. You know you need to, but he just feels so warm and earthly beneath you, and you really need your grounding.

He stands up then, his hands diving underneath your shirt, and you cry out a moan from how perfect this all feels. You don't know anything, you've lost all your senses.

All you know is Jonathan.